

Message Text

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S E C R E T STATE 154977 TOSEC 050060

NODIS

CHEROKEE

FOLLOWING REPEAT AMMAN 4413 ACTION SECSTATE JUL 1.

QUOTE: S E C R E T AMMAN 4413

NODIS/CHEROKEE

EE.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR, JO, IQ

SUBJECT: JORDAN-IRAQ RELATIONS

REF: STATE 151703

1. SUMMARY: REVIEWED WITH RIFAI OUR ASSESSMENT OF THE SITUATION IN SAUDI ARABIA AND IRAQ. HE IS PARTICULARLY DISTURBED BY IRAQ. SEES THEM AS INEVITABLE MEDDLERS AND AS EXPANSIONISTS ESPECIALLY INTO GULF AND SYRIA. CONTINUES TO BELIEVE THEY POSE REAL DANGERS FOR JORDAN'S FRIENDS IN THE GULF AND BELIEVES HE WAS HELPFUL DURING HIS AND KING'S LAST TRIP THERE IN HEADING OFF IRAQI DESIGNS. RIFAI DOES NOT EXCLUDE SYRIAN USE OF KURDS IN FUTURE TO CAUSE PROBLEM FOR IRAQ AND ENDED BY TELLING ME THAT ALMOST ANY REGIME IN IRAQ WOULD BE BETTER THAN PRESENT ONE. END SUMMARY.

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WM SPOKE WITH PRIME MINISTER RIFAI JUNE 30 ABOUT MESSAGE REFTEL. BRIEFED HIM IN GENERAL TERMS ALONG LINES REFTEL. (I EXPECT SEE KING OVER NEXT FEW DAYS AND TO PROVIDE SIMILAR BRIEFING FOR HIM).

3. RIFAI DID NOT SEEM TO DIFFER WITH OUR ASSESSMENT GREATLY IN SAUDI ARABIA. HE REMAINS CONCERNED THAT THERE IS SOME SORT OF SPLIT BETWEEN FAHD AND SULTAN AND SAYS HE WILL KEEP US UP TO DATE ON INFORMATION WHICH JORDANIANS DEVELOP FROM THEIR CONTACTS WITH SAUDIS.

4. THERE IS MORE DAYLIGHT BETWEEN OUR RESPECTIVE ASSESSMENTS ON THE IRAQIS. A PROPER PREFACE TO THIS SECTION OF THE REPORT WOULD BE TO STATE THAT RIFAI SEEMS TO SHARE KING'S VIEW THAT IRAQIS ARE UP TO NO GOOD IN THIS PART OF THE WORLD. IT IS ALSO TRUE THAT THE HASHEMITE DISLIKE OF THE PRESENT IRAQI REGIME IS DEEP-SEATED AND UNYIELDING IN SPITE OF THE PUBLIC RELATIONS ASPECTS OF THE OSTENSIBLE PATCH-UP IN RELATIONS WHICH ACCOMPANIED THE RECENT VISIT OF AN IRAQI ECONOMIC DELEGATION HEADED BY MINISTER OF INDUSTRY JAZRAWI (SEPTTEL).

5. RIFAI AGREES WITH US THAT THERE SEEMS TO BE AN IRAQI CONCERN WITH THE GULF AND THE SMALLER ARAB STATES PROBABLY RELATED TO ITS ECONOMIC SURVIVAL. BUT HE ADDS TO THIS TWO OTHER FACTORS: (A) AN INEVITABLE IRAQI URGE TO MEDDLE, AND (B) AN IRAQI BAATHIST "DRANG NACH SUDEN" WHICH MAKES THEIR INTEREST IN THE GULF STATES A GREAT DEAL MORE THAN ONE OF PURELY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. FURTHER RIFAI DOES NOT BELIEVE THE SAUDIS REALLY APPRECIATE THE DEPTH OF THE PROBLEM. HE BELIEVES FAHD ON HIS LAST VISIT TO IRAQ WAS SOLD A BILL OF GOODS AND FAILS TO APPRECIATE THE IRAQI POTENTIAL FOR EXPANSIONISM. AS WE HAVE EARLIER REPORTED, BOTH RIFAI AND KING WERE IMPRESSED BY IRAQI STATEMENTS AND THOSE WHICH THEY HEARD IN KUWAIT WHICH INDICATE IRAQIS HAVE DE-SIGNS ON KUWAITI ISLANDS. ALSO IRAQIS HAVE LED
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RIFAI TO BELIEVE THEY EVENTUALLY WOULD LIKE TO RETAKE THE LOWER GULF ISLANDS OF THE TUNBS AND ABU MUSA FROM IRAN. RIFAI ADDED THAT HE HOPED THEY HAD MADE REAL PROGRESS IN THE GULF DURING THEIR LAST TRIP IN HEADING OFF IRAQI EFFORTS AT A DEFENSE PACT.

6. RIFAI AGREES WITH US ON THE DANGER TO SYRIA.

HE SEES THE IRAQI AIM AS ONE OF CREATING A UNIFIED, RADICAL ARAB (BAATHIST) STATE TO THE NORTH OF JORDAN AND SAUDI ARABIA WHICH CAN CONTINUE TO FLY THE FLAG OF REJECTION IN THE ARAB-ISRAELI DISPUTE. UNDOUBTEDLY HE IS INFLUENCED BY JORDAN'S IMPROVING RELATIONS WITH SYRIA.

7. HOWEVER ASSESSING JORDAN'S INTERESTS FURTHER, HE MADE IT CLEAR THAT JORDAN PROFITS MOST WHEN SYRIA AND IRAQ ARE FARTHEST APART, SINCE EACH THEM SEEMS TO INCREASE THE TEMPO OF ITS SUIT OF JORDAN. HE ASKED RHETORICALLY WHAT WAS THE REAL US VIEW OF THE IRAQI REGIME AND WOULD WE PREFER AN ALTERNATIVE. I REFERRED BACK TO OUR ORIGINAL ASSESSMENT WHICH INDICATED WE SAW BOTH POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE FACTORS IN THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT. HE IMPLIED, BUT DID NOT ASK WHETHER WE WOULD LIKE TO SEE THE PRESENT REGIME REPLACED BY ANOTHER. HE WENT ON TO INDICATE HOWEVER THAT THE IRAQIS HAD LOTS OF POSSIBILITIES FOR RENEWED INTERNAL TROUBLES AND THAT THE KURDISH ISSUE WAS NOT THE LEAST AMONG THEM. HE THEN SAID THAT THE SYRIANS SEEMED TO BE MORE AND MORE FED UP WITH IRAQ AND MIGHT WELL TRY TO USE THE KURDS TO MAKE TROUBLE FOR SADDAM HUSSEIN AND BAKR TO TAKE SOME OF THE PRESSURE OFF DAMASCUS.

8. RIFAI ALSO AGREES WITH US THAT SAUDI ARABIA AND ESPECIALLY IRAN HAVE KEY ROLES VIS-A-VIS IRAQ. HE SAID THAT JORDAN WAS MYSTIFIED ABOUT THE SHAH'S REAL OBJECTIVES BUT HE DID NOT SEEM TO BE AWARE OF THE KING'S EARLIER INTEREST EXPRESSED TO ME IN GOING TO TEHRAN TO TALK THE ISSUE OVER WITH THE SHAH.

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OM WE ENDED BY RIFAI'S CONCLUDING THAT ALMOST ANY SUCCESSOR REGIME IN IRAQ WOULD BE BETTER THAN THE PRESENT ONE.
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